

Essential Services vs. Essential Time Off

**Building Culturally Safe Workplaces
for Indigenous Employees in BC**

Coastal Research, Education, & Advocacy Network (2025)

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CREAN is located on unceded Coast Salish Territories, specifically of the Lekwungen and W SÁNEĆ peoples. The term Coast Salish is used to encompass a number of Indigenous peoples, including Xwsepsum, Hul'qumi'num, Klahoose, Lekwungen (Songhees), MALAXEt, Musqueam, OStlq'emeylem, Pentlatch, Scia'new (Beecher Bay), Sliammon, Shishalh, Skxwú7mesh-ulh Úxwumixw, Stó:lo, Straits, Tsleil-Waututh, T'Sou-ke, W SÁNEĆ (Pauquachin, Tsartlip, Tsawout, Tseycum), and Xwemalkwu. We occupy space on the territories of the Lekwungen people and are committed to decolonization. We strive to raise awareness and support and engage in grassroots research and activism around social and environmental justice issues. CREAN seeks to improve community connections, and inspire social change through engaging, inclusive, and non-hierarchical approaches.

As well, we would like to recognize all of the ecosystems, ancestors, communities, and people who continue to make CREAN's work – and our personal and collective learning – possible.

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Content within this report may be upsetting to some people, especially survivors of trauma. Please practice self-care and take breaks if needed.

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Executive Summary

The historical and ongoing influences of colonialism continue to harm Indigenous communities by severing ties to culture, land, and community. Access to ceremonies and cultural events is essential to Indigenous wellbeing, as being physically present with others lies at the heart of these practices. Ceremonies serve as pathways to healing historical and intergenerational trauma, while maintaining continuity with ancestral knowledge and promoting wellbeing.

This study sought to examine how workplaces in British Columbia could better accommodate Indigenous cultural time off for holidays, including ceremonies, grieving, seasonal duties, and community obligations, and how such accommodations (and/or lack thereof) impact the wellbeing, retention, and advancement of Indigenous employees. The project builds on a community forum held in Victoria in April 2024, which highlighted the pressing need for policy changes.

Current cultural-leave provisions in Canada remain scarce, fragmented, and inconsistent across provinces and industries, leaving many Indigenous workers without adequate protections. Rather than treating time off for ceremonies as a discretionary favor, organizations must recognize it as part of their responsibility to uphold Indigenous rights and self-determined governance. This aligns with commitments outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA).

The central research questions guiding this study was: (1) What barriers exist for Indigenous employees in accessing cultural leave, (2) and how can employers create culturally safe workplaces that recognize and respect Indigenous cultural time? We employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys, in-depth interviews with Elders/Knowledge Keepers, and focus groups with Indigenous employees and employers.

Key Findings

Our findings reveal several consistent themes:

1. Barriers to Cultural Leave

Indigenous employees frequently reported experiences of discrimination, including denial of leave requests, lack of recognition of Indigenous holidays, and dismissal of discrimination complaints. Fear of backlash, job loss, or reputational harm often prevents employees from speaking out.

2. Employer Intentions and Gaps

Many employers expressed a strong sense of willingness to support cultural leave, but lacked practical frameworks or guidance on how to implement it in the workplace. Policies vary significantly with some organizations offering supportive measures while others actively discourage requests. Diversity and inclusion efforts remain superficial when limited to one-time training sessions. Employers called for concrete tools such as plain-language policy templates, case studies, and access to Indigenous advisors.

3. Benefits of Effective Implementation

Where cultural leave has been effectively integrated, employees reported improved morale, stronger teamwork, reduced burnout, and deeper commitment to their organizations. However, issues of clarity and consistency persist, particularly in multi-site organizations and sectors with part-time or seasonal workers.

4. Policy Design Principles

Employers should establish dedicated cultural leave policies, distinct from vacation or sick leave. A recommended model includes:

- At least five paid and five unpaid days annually, renewable each year.
- Flexibility to accommodate broad definitions of family and community.
- Presumption of approval unless compelling business reasons exist.
- Protections ensuring cultural leave does not negatively affect performance reviews, promotions, or compensation.
- Accessible processes, including one-page employee guides and manager checklists.

5. Monitoring and Accountability

To ensure progress, organizations should track metrics such as:

- Retention and promotion rates of Indigenous employees.
- Representation in leadership roles.
- Uptake of cultural leave.
- Perceptions of safety and fairness through a cultural safety index.
- Regular six- to twelve-month reviews allow organizations to identify successes and address gaps.

6. Safe Reporting Mechanisms

Effective reporting systems are essential. Best practice includes dual reporting options: through regular HR channels and through a dedicated Indigenous HR/ombudsperson function (shared across small employers if necessary). Reports should be anonymous, timelines for response transparent, and aftercare supported by Elders or Knowledge Keepers.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

This research demonstrates that cultural leave is not only feasible but necessary.

- **For Employers:** Implementing robust cultural leave policies builds trust, strengthens employee engagement, and supports recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff. Clear reporting systems and Indigenous leadership in policy development are non-negotiable elements of cultural safety.
- **For Unions:** Collective agreements can include cultural leave provisions and accountability mechanisms, ensuring that protections are enforceable.
- **For Funders:** Funding bodies can set cultural safety requirements as conditions for investment, driving sector-wide adoption.
- **For Training Providers:** Short, accessible training modules (e.g., micro-credentials for managers) can provide practical, ongoing learning instead of one-off workshops.

The evidence is clear: *cultural leave policies, coupled with safe reporting systems and meaningful Indigenous leadership directly enhance employee wellbeing, retention, and advancement.* By institutionalizing cultural leave, embedding Indigenous voices in decision-making, and holding themselves accountable through measurable outcomes, workplaces can move beyond symbolic gestures toward meaningful reconciliation and equity. These findings offer a roadmap for employers, unions, and funders committed to building workplaces where Indigenous employees can thrive.

Introduction

This research project aimed to address systemic barriers faced by Indigenous employees in British Columbia (BC), with a particular focus on the recognition and accommodation of cultural holidays and ceremonies including pow wow, sun dance, grief ceremonies, and sweat lodge ceremonies. It was spurred and informed by a community forum held in April 2024 in Victoria, BC, where over 30 community members highlighted the challenges they face in their workplaces in relation to cultural time off.

The goal of the project is to create culturally safe and inclusive workplaces for Indigenous employees in British Columbia by addressing systemic barriers that hinder their ability to thrive and advance in their careers. The critical gap this research addresses is the lack of

comprehensive, community-informed data on the intersection of Indigenous cultural needs and workplace practices. By focusing on both employee and employer perspectives, the study will provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities for fostering culturally safe workplaces. It will generate actionable strategies for employers and policymakers, ensuring the findings are replicable across sectors and geographies, ultimately driving systemic change in the labor market.

Specific focuses of the project included:

- Accommodation of Indigenous cultural holidays and ceremonies and workplace policies, including time off;
- Addressing discriminatory practices;
- Fostering equitable hiring and leadership opportunities;
- Workplace barriers, and the tools needed to address them.

Many Indigenous employees work in environments that fail to respect cultural leave, forcing them to choose between their cultural identity and maintaining employment. This leads to burnout, low retention, and limited leadership opportunities. This exclusion not only affects individual well-being but also prevents workplaces from reflecting the diversity of Canada's cultural landscape. Lack of recognition of practices reinforces colonial constructs, contributing to further erasure of Indigenous ways of being and definitions of wellbeing.

By fostering culturally safe workplaces, this project seeks to empower Indigenous employees to thrive, reduce burnout, enhance inclusion and retention, and create leadership opportunities, while also engaging employers in adopting more equitable hiring practices and integrating Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Reconciliation (EDI&R) principles.

The research project is led by the following questions:

1. What barriers do Indigenous employees face in accessing time off for cultural holidays and ceremonies, and how do these barriers impact their well-being, retention, and career advancement?
2. What are the attitudes, knowledge gaps, and challenges among employers regarding the implementation of culturally inclusive workplace policies?
3. How do discriminatory workplace policies and practices contribute to systemic exclusion, burnout, and underrepresentation of Indigenous employees in leadership roles?
4. What are the most effective strategies for engaging employers in adopting culturally safe practices and equitable hiring processes?
5. What measurable outcomes can be achieved through culturally safe workplace initiatives, including increased retention, leadership representation, and inclusivity for Indigenous employees?

From an economic perspective, workplaces that do not support Indigenous cultural needs limit employees' career progression and income potential, exacerbating socio-economic disparities. Organizations also lose talented individuals and miss opportunities to integrate diverse cultural perspectives into their operations.

This project not only addresses the complex factors driving unequal labor market outcomes for equity-seeking groups, such as discrimination and cultural exclusion, but also provides practical, community-driven, and employer-focused solutions. It emphasizes wraparound services, co-design with Indigenous communities, and workplace reform. This initiative tackles systemic inequities by working directly with employers to reform workplace policies and practices. The project fosters long-term systemic change by increasing Indigenous representation in leadership and decision-making roles and exploring the attitudes, practices, and barriers within workplaces regarding Indigenous cultural holidays and inclusion.

Recognizing that colonialism is embedded in institutional research, this project aims to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and meaningful consultation throughout all stages of the study. This involves collaboration with an Indigenous consulting group to build culturally grounded research practices and seeking input on the data analysis and findings from Elders/Knowledge Keepers and community members.

The report sections are as follows: the literature review and context establishes further background on the project's importance; CREAN's research design for the project is outlined; the four key findings from focus groups, interviews, and surveys are described; and the report concludes with future directions and implications, outlining next steps for this research in policy and practice.

Literature Review / Context

Importance of Ceremony and Community

The historical and ongoing influences of colonialism harm Indigenous communities by severing ties to culture and community, causing an irreparable loss of language, knowledge, and traditions. Indigenous culture is rooted in relationships and community presence, with a relational outlook embedded in language, ceremony, songs, and shared stories (Watson et al., 2022). Access to ceremonies and cultural events is essential, as a physical presence with others lies at the heart of these traditions. Ceremonies also support Indigenous mental and physical health; referred to as “culture as treatment” by Baker et al. (2017). Ceremony is one way that communities approach healing trauma and promoting wellbeing (p. 208).

Indigenous Presence in the Workplace

Since the expansion of the settler state into Canada in the 1500s, many Indigenous peoples are unable to live off the land independently and are compelled to join the wage economy (Camfield, 2019), where economic conditions remain tumultuous due to colonialism. First Nations and Métis individuals earn significantly less per hour than non-Indigenous employees and many are employed in part-time work or occupations that tend to have lower benefits, including the ability to take time off (Government of Canada, 2024). Discrimination leads to worse working conditions, with Indigenous employees reporting twice the amount of discrimination compared to non-Indigenous counterparts (Government of Canada, 2024). This conflicts with Article 17, which states that Indigenous employees must not be subjected to discriminatory conditions in the workplace (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2021). Workplaces that do not respect Indigenous culture present barriers to employees, threatening their wellbeing and limiting opportunities for career advancement. This conflicts with Call to Action 92, which calls for equitable access to opportunities and emphasizes corporate responsibility in fostering culturally safe workplaces (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). British Columbia's Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act demonstrates that institutions, like workplaces, must adopt policies that recognize Indigenous knowledge systems and practices (Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2025).

Cultural Leave

The intersection between the workplace and Indigenous culture extends beyond company culture and into the policies that workplaces have to support Indigenous employees. One example includes cultural leave. While research on cultural leave is sparse, there is a consistency across existing literature in calling for cultural leave; Hunter and Gray (2014) write that flexible cultural leave policies improve Indigenous employee retention (p. 7).

Current federal cultural leave policies in Canada allow government employees who self-declare as Indigenous to request two days of paid leave and three days of unpaid leave per fiscal year (Diotte, 2024). This leave includes both ceremonies and traditional practices such as hunting, fishing, and harvesting (Legislative Services Branch, 2024). Policies on cultural leave vary by province/territory and company. Some examples include:

- The Public Service Alliance of Canada in the Northwest Territories allows for four days of paid cultural leave, and additional unpaid days. They broadened the definition of “immediate family” for Indigenous employees to include extended family, Elders/Knowledge Keepers, and any individual the employee considers family (Spirito, 2024).
- BC Teachers Federation proposed five days of paid leave for Indigenous employees to attend cultural events (*Cultural Leave for Aboriginal Employees*, 2019).

- Toronto Metropolitan University allows ‘eligible’ Indigenous staff from Canada to take up to five paid days per year to support “healing and wellbeing” (*New Indigenous Wellbeing and Cultural Practice Leave*, 2023).
- Resident Doctors of BC allow Indigenous residents to have five days of leave, with additional days of unpaid leave (*Ceremonial, Cultural, Spiritual and Compassionate Leave for Indigenous Residents Explainer*, n.d.).

Although some workplaces offer cultural leave, practices are not standard, creating barriers for Indigenous employees. In line with Article 11, Indigenous people have the right to practice their cultural traditions and customs (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2021); workplaces must support these rights by creating policies that accommodate cultural practices.

Barriers in Accessing Cultural Leave

While current leave policies are a step in the right direction, they may not cover all aspects of Indigenous protocol and culture. For example, “family” is often understood much broader within Indigenous circles, meaning the passing of extended community members can result in more losses over a given year (Julien et al., 2017). Respondents in a study noted that it is important for them to attend these funerals, for interpersonal, cultural, and spiritual reasons and that they wanted better flexibility within the workplace for bereavement leave (Julien et al., 2017).

Indigenous employees’ ability to access time off further intersects with other intra-workplace conflicts. For example, many organizations rely on unions to advocate for time off and better policies. Camfield (2019) notes that “unions have not always served the immediate interests of their [Indigenous] communities” (p. 83); given that many of the cultural leave policies are embedded in collective agreements, there can be for Indigenous individuals who do not feel represented by their union.

This study seeks to address a critical gap: the absence of community-informed data on how Indigenous cultural needs, specifically access to cultural time off, intersects with workplace practices. Drawing on insights from both employees and employers, the findings will highlight barriers that hinder cultural safety and identify ways to improve workplaces.

Research Design

A descriptive, mixed-methods approach was chosen because it allows for breadth and depth in examining Indigenous workplace experiences. This approach aligns with Indigenous traditions of oral storytelling, where focus groups and interviews offered insights into the perspectives of employees, Elders/Knowledge Keepers, and employers; and with policy evidence standards through quantitative data, where surveys provided data on common trends. Including both

Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants ensured that the research could capture systemic issues and relational dynamics, addressing the project's aim of understanding barriers and opportunities for creating culturally safe workplaces.

Outreach

Employee sampling took many forms including community outreach (e.g. press releases, posters, newsletters) and targeted media campaigns. Employer, manager, and HR professionals sampling methods utilized media campaigns, phone calls, and direct emails sent to partner organizations, employers, and Indigenous employer networks. Events (e.g. focus groups) were listed on CREAN's website, EventBrite, Facebook, and local calendars in Victoria. The participant inclusion criteria can be found in Appendix A. Elders/Knowledge Keepers with existing relationships to CREAN were personally invited to take part. While outreach was broad, the sample may underrepresent Indigenous employees in remote or non-networked workplaces, a limitation to be considered in interpretation.

Research Design

Surveys

Surveys were conducted through SurveyMonkey, employing a mixed-methods approach to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys were sent to the two study groups: Indigenous employees and Indigenous and non-Indigenous employer, manager, and HR professionals. The survey for Indigenous employees contained 17 questions, centered around exploring experiences of discrimination, access to cultural leave, and recommendations for creating culturally safe workplaces. The survey for Indigenous and non-Indigenous employer, manager, and HR professionals contained 26 questions, focused on exploring current policies around cultural leave, what practices are currently in place to support Indigenous inclusion, and how reports of discrimination are handled. Prior to beginning the survey, participants were prompted to review a consent form outlining the aim of the project, their role, and potential risks. Participants could choose to stop their survey at any time without consequence. Once the survey had been completed, data could not be withdrawn.

Focus Groups & Interviews

In recognition of the power of oral traditions, focus groups were conducted with Indigenous employees and employers, managers, and HR professionals. These circles allow participants to share their experiences in a culturally grounded way, fostering trust and community collaboration. Focus groups were held in-person in Victoria, BC, and online using secure conferencing platforms. Five sessions were led by Oodenaw, an Indigenous consulting group; four sessions were led by CREAN's research team.

Focus groups were approximately 60-90 minutes in length and consisted of a semi-structured discussion. One-on-one interviews were conducted with Elders/Knowledge Keepers in the community to gain their perspectives.

To participate in the focus group, participants signed a consent form (Appendix B) signifying that they understand the project, their role in it, and the risks. Participants could withdraw their focus group contributions at any point before the cutoff date. After the cutoff date, focus group data cannot be withdrawn once it has been anonymized and integrated into group findings.

For Indigenous employees, the focus group questions (Appendix C) were split into four sections: 1) Cultural Leave Practices: explores how workplaces handle requests for cultural or ceremonial leave. 2) Cultural Safety and Inclusion: examines what makes a workplace feel culturally safe. 3) Discrimination and Reporting Mechanisms: explores experiences of cultural bias in the workplace and how reports are handled. 4) Impact of Policies and Suggestions of Support: explores how cultural leave policies affect the wellbeing of employees and identifies areas for improvement.

For Indigenous and non-Indigenous employers, managers, and HR professionals, the focus group questions (Appendix D) were split into four sections: 1) Current cultural leave policies and practices: explores how decisions around Indigenous cultural leave are currently being made. 2) Cultural Inclusion Efforts: examines how organizations go beyond training and land acknowledgment to support Indigenous communities. 3) Approaches to Indigenous Equity: explores how Indigenous inclusion is prioritized within equity efforts. 4) Areas for Improved Support: explores what meaningful Indigenous cultural inclusion looks like.

Barriers were identified that may limit participants willingness to participate or access to the study including limited availability, time constraints, and concerns about confidentiality. Strategies to address these barriers presented largely as flexibility in interview/focus group scheduling. Participants were also assured that all responses were confidential and would be anonymized. In order to support the wellness of participants, resources for additional support were included in the confidentiality forms, including the numbers for different crisis lines and free counselling.

Data Analysis

CREAN employed thematic analysis for the qualitative data, identifying patterns and recurring themes related to barriers, discrimination, and effective strategies. This process involved transcribing and coding interview and focus group data, followed by detailed analysis to identify key findings. For the survey data, descriptive statistical analysis was used to quantify responses and compare results across various groups, sectors, and regions. Qualitative and quantitative data was triangulated to create a comprehensive view of the issues and solutions, ensuring the research findings are robust, actionable, and could not be dismissed as anecdotal.

Findings

1. Lack of Understanding/Cultural Misunderstandings from Employers

“...but the gaps in understanding... means that I have to spend extra energy just existing in that space and it really takes away my best work, because as much as some of these people have the best ideas in mind, I don't really want to be the spokesperson for a whole Indigenous community.”

Due to a lack of understanding or unawareness of Indigenous traditions and cultures, many employees felt that their employers had trouble understanding why they needed to take time off for cultural events. There is also a carried misunderstanding of the effects of colonialism on Indigenous peoples, and the significance of being able to carry out these traditions and ceremonies—this stems from the systemic erasure of Indigenous laws and traditions. Some participants had lost status or had been disconnected from their Indigenous heritage, meaning that these ceremonies and traditions carried great importance for them, but employers often did not understand these contexts. Many cultural practices happen in seasonal cycles, especially winter months. Employers often do not understand that cultural commitments might last weeks or months, not a single day. Another participant noted that some organizations are starting to become more aware and flexible. While there has been recognition of some colonial harms, such as residential schools, the process of change is still uneven. Indigenous employees felt the impact of being between Indigenous worldviews (obligations, spirituality, community) and Western frameworks (religion, rigid scheduling, colonial institutions). Employees and employers alike felt that there was a need for more education and support to facilitate understanding in the workplace. Several focus group participants emphasized how bereavement is a cultural obligation, sharing about the scale of extended kinship networks and the cultural expectation to attend funerals and grieving ceremonies. For some, this can mean multiple bereavement events each year, with entire communities gathering to honour the deceased. Many shared that their employers did not extend understanding to this, highlighting how standard bereavement leave policies often fall short for Indigenous employees.

2. Gaps Between Policy and Practice

“...cultural safety lines of respect and honoring Indigenous heritage and like their traditions...are not really integrated in performance indicators, and trying to constantly have to prove your value as an employee is not culturally safe.”

Surveys engaged employees, the majority of whom self-identified as Indigenous, to explore their experiences of requesting cultural leave, the supportiveness of their workplaces, and the impact of organizational practices on their well-being and career trajectories, along with employers from

a variety of sectors, asking about existing workplace policies, implementation challenges, and openness to cultural inclusion initiatives. One of the most consistent findings across both surveys is the absence of formal recognition for Indigenous cultural observances. Only 41.9% of employers reported having formal written procedures, but a similar percentage (32.6%) admitted to using informal, case-by-case accommodations. A sizable proportion (20.9%) reported no recognition at all, with the remaining 4.6% unclear. Indeed, many Indigenous employees' access to cultural leave was found to be reliant on the goodwill of individual managers rather than enforceable organizational rules. This reliance on discretion from managers mimics colonial paternalism; enforcing colonial patterns of Indigenous suppression. The employee survey foregrounds the effects of this uneven policy landscape. A remarkable 83.3% of employees reported asking time off for cultural reasons such as powwows, ceremonies, or the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

While 42% reported that their petitions for leave were approved without trouble, more than half (51%) received some type of opposition from their company, and 7% were denied. Furthermore, 42% of employees reported needing to utilize their own vacation or sick time to attend cultural events. This disparity between policy and lived experience deeply foregrounds Indigenous employees' precarious situation when it comes to accessing time off. Without formal procedures in place, cultural leave remains precarious, which leaves workers subject to inconsistent and inequitable practices. Participants sometimes had to miss cultural events, or take personal or sick days to participate.

3. Systemic Barriers and Impacts on Well-being

“The choices we have to make puts us at odds with our culture and employers.”

Beyond the lack of written policies, both employees and employers cited systemic hurdles to Indigenous cultural integration. From the employer's standpoint, the most often reported obstacles were a lack of management understanding (70%), the absence of established workplace policies (50%), and operational or personnel limits (62.5%). Many employers also admitted that their businesses lacked the information or guidance needed to implement best practices, with 35% citing low resources for policy formulation or training. For employees, these impediments have a direct influence on their work experiences and well-being.

Nearly 46% of Indigenous employees responded that being unable to take cultural leave created in them a sense of stress and irritation, while 22% experienced major negative consequences, such as burnout and trouble balancing work and culture. This emotional toll was exacerbated by systemic inequities: 23% of employees claimed that not being able to take time off for cultural practices had hampered their career advancement, while 36% reported no impact, indicating a neutral but nevertheless unsupportive atmosphere. Only a minority of respondents believed that

formal workplace policies meant to guide employees access to cultural leave supported the professional development of employees. Similarly, asking for and getting resistance to taking cultural leave left Indigenous focus group participants to feel isolated and stressed due to the need to self-advocate in the workplace. Some simply avoided asking for time off, as they found the process of having to explain themselves exhausting. Many felt that this affected their workplace performance and relations in the workplace, as they felt they had to choose between two worlds—their workplace, and their familial and cultural commitments—Western workplaces usually treat obligations as optional and this creates conflicts.

Discrimination and bigotry emerged as recurring themes. More than 56% of employees reported workplace discrimination based on their Indigenous identity, however less than half of these occurrences were reported to HR or management. When asked why they did not disclose, employees cited fear of reprisal (13%), distrust of HR (47%), and the idea that "it would not change anything" (35%). These numbers show how structural hurdles limit access to traditional observances while also undermining Indigenous employees' trust in workplace mechanisms supposed to protect them. Focus group and interview respondents discussed the fear of retaliation and/or job loss, which prevented Indigenous employees from speaking out about racism or bias. Others discussed the relations between their coworkers when trying to discuss culture: "They comment about lazy natives, joke about the treaty benefits, or people acting like us, or leave is just an excuse to brush off work when you don't feel like it."

The cumulative impact of these barriers is clear: without culturally inclusive policies and practices in place, Indigenous employees are at a higher risk of stress, marginalization, and blocked career advancement. These findings show systemic disparities that transcend individual workplaces and necessitate concerted measures across government.

4. Opportunities for Change and Collaboration

"When people are supported, the work gets done."

Despite these limitations, the surveys reveal significant prospects for change and show that both employees and employers are motivated to improve working conditions. On the employer side, 47.5% indicated their firms were "very willing" to embrace stronger cultural leave policies, with another 32.5% saying they were "somewhat willing." Only a small percentage were unsure or hesitant. Importantly, 75% of companies expressed an openness to working with Indigenous organizations or experts to increase workplace diversity.

This implies that, while gaps exist, there is potential for transformation if the proper guidance and resources are implemented. Employers also highlighted specific services that may help employees grow. The most commonly identified needs included policy development guidance (59%), Indigenous cultural awareness training (69%), Indigenous-led mentorship or consulting

services (54%), and diversity program financing (49%). These findings indicate that employers are not opposed to change, but instead require clear frameworks and resources to function efficiently. Employer participants discussed wanting to make these changes, but lacking the supports or frameworks to make these things sustainable in businesses.

Employees shared many of these insights, with a significant emphasis on implementing Indigenous-led projects and structural assistance within the workplace. When asked what changes they wanted to see, 58% requested flexible cultural leave policies, 61% recognized Indigenous holidays, 55% supported cultural training for staff and leadership, and 46% campaigned for Indigenous-led employee networks. Beyond regulatory changes, employees emphasized the need for deeper cultural improvements, with many stating that Indigenous voices were only "sometimes" or "rarely" valued in their companies. These thoughts highlight the necessity of including Indigenous voices in leadership, organizational decision-making, and everyday workplace culture. Focus group participants felt that if there were more education in the workplace as well as a clear cultural leave policy, it would increase their retention at work. Noted by one participant, the most significant interaction was when they felt supported by their supervisor—not just saying yes to cultural time off, but taking the time to learn about what it is and share that information with the rest of the organization. Cultural safety is not just about creating policies, but also creating and fostering an environment that allows for people to connect with their own cultures and with others.

5. The Desire to Integrate Indigenous Perspectives at All Levels

“When my identity is supported, I feel more connected, confident, and engaged in my work. When it’s overlooked, it creates a barrier that makes it hard to fully be myself in the workplace.”

As such, while knowledge of Indigenous cultural inclusion is increasing, significant gaps exist in workplace practices, policies, and organizational culture. Employees' cultural participation is frequently hampered by institutional impediments that contribute to stress, burnout, and blocked career advancement. Employers face major challenges due to a lack of understanding, operational limits, and insufficient resources. For both employees and employers, there was an understanding that inclusion of Indigeneity in the workplace could not be confined to checking boxes or token events, but establishing and integrating Indigenous histories, rights, and identities into the workplace. There was a call for more listening, meaningful actions, and long-term relationships with local Indigenous nations, for “Indigenization, not Institutionalization.” This concept of Indigenization ties into Articles 5 and 31 from UNDRIP, where Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct institutions and traditions while maintaining the right to participate in the nation-state, and to protect and develop their heritage and traditions (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2021). Further, employers and employees both described the need to uplift and support Indigenous people that are in leadership and decision-making roles. Interviews with Elders/Knowledge

Keepers discussed the importance of restorative approaches, where employers and institutions are called to make amends and build respectful futures.

These findings provide policymakers and other stakeholders with numerous clear actionable steps. First, there is an urgent need for official cultural leave policies that ensure consistency across organizations. Second, genuine inclusion will include investments in Indigenous-led training, mentoring, and consulting to ensure that cultural safety is directed by Indigenous knowledge and leadership. Third, collaboration among businesses, Indigenous groups, and governments requires finance and practical resources, especially for small and medium-sized organizations that may lack capacity on their own. By addressing these concerns, companies can go beyond symbolic inclusion and effect systemic change that acknowledges Indigenous cultural traditions as vital to corporate existence. These activities are critical not only for employment equity, but also for promoting reconciliation in Canada.

Implications and Future Directions

The following section was guided by collaboration in both CREAN's research team and with research participants. These implications and future directions stemmed from themes emerging from interviews, surveys, focus groups, and dialogues with Indigenous employees and employers, as well as referencing current literature on cultural leave and employment standards. Each recommendation was developed in consultation with our Indigenous partner organization, Oodenaw. CREAN had one-on-one conversations with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to share the recommendations, and to ensure that the recommendations and implications reflected collective consensus.

Recommendations for Employers

These recommendations emerged through a participatory process, consulting with Indigenous employees and employers in British Columbia through focus groups, interviews, and surveys. Through these conversations, participants identified gaps in existing policies and emphasized the need for clear and culturally-informed workplace practices. Key themes that guided the development of these recommendations included the importance of extended kinship, Indigenous leadership and representation in decision-making, recognition of lived experiences, and a need for understanding of Indigenous culture and the historical context. From employers, we saw a genuine willingness to improve, but uncertainty of where to begin; we also saw policy/practice gaps, uneven awareness, and structural barriers (e.g., fear of retaliation, or the undervaluing of lived experience) that require further navigation.

1. Adopt a dedicated, paid Cultural Leave (CL) policy

- a. Minimum standard: Five paid days annually, plus up to five unpaid days employees can allocate across ceremonies, grieving, community obligations, and seasonal commitments.
 - b. Eligibility: Definitions should reflect Indigenous realities—recognize extended kin, Elders/Knowledge Keepers, community members, and Nation-specific protocols in bereavement and ceremony.
 - c. Scheduling: Notice “as feasible,” with a presumption of approval unless there is a bona fide operational reason. Explore shift swaps/earned time off before any denial. Elders/Knowledge Keepers may be consulted.
 - d. No-penalty rule: CL use cannot affect performance ratings, promotion eligibility, bonuses, attendance thresholds, or contract renewals.
 - e. Access: Provide a one-page “How to request CL” guide at onboarding; give managers a matching approval checklist for consistency.
2. Build culturally safe reporting and response systems
- a. Dual channels: Maintain the standard HR route and add an Indigenous HR representative or independent ombudsperson.
 - b. Safety measures: Allow anonymous reporting; prohibit “who complained?” inquiries; safeguard temporary/contract staff so reporting does not jeopardize renewals or scheduling.
 - c. Service standards: Acknowledge reports within a set timeframe and communicate clear investigation timelines.
 - d. Aftercare: Beyond Employee and Family Assistance Program, offer access to culturally grounded supports (Elders/Knowledge Keepers) after substantiated incidents.
3. Make learning experiential, Indigenous-led, and embedded
- a. Learning plan: All staff complete an Indigenous cultural-safety program with scenario-based learning on microaggressions, subtle bias, and fair performance management.
 - b. Elder/Knowledge Keeper program: Host quarterly circles; enable confidential one-to-one consults for supervisors making CL decisions; budget honoraria.
 - c. Reduce unpaid teaching burden: Create an internal content library (FAQs, short explainers) so the same individuals aren’t repeatedly asked to educate colleagues.
4. De-colonize advancement: fix promotion, mentoring, and credentials
- a. Transparent criteria: Publish selection criteria and scoring rubrics; weight lived and learned experience alongside formal credentials where appropriate.

- b. Career scaffolding: Fund required certifications, offer paid study time, and cover travel so remote or site-based workers can access training. Guarantee interviews for internal Indigenous applicants who meet baseline qualifications.
 - c. Mentorship: Pair each Indigenous staff member with two mentors—one role-specific and one senior Indigenous mentor (internal or external) for cultural/leadership support.
- 5. Align governance and accountability
 - a. Advisory/Leadership Committee: Establish an Indigenous committee with a direct line to the executive and Board; “park titles at the door” to enable candid advice.
 - b. Annual review: Conduct an Indigenous-lens review of HR policies with Indigenous staff involved.
 - c. Public commitments: Share core elements of your CL policy and publish annual progress metrics.

Recommendations for Policy, Unions, Funders, and Partners

The following recommendations were guided by meaningful engagement with Indigenous employees and employers during focus groups, interviews, and surveys, as well as reviewing relevant literature and existing policy standards. Community members suggested cultural leave policies and other supports to be built into funding structures (i.e. grant requirements) and federal policies. Efforts should be directed towards government, policy-makers, and unions to establish clear standards for employers to follow.

1. Governments/regulators: Add CL to employment standards as a universal entitlement with a paid minimum, broader family definitions reflecting Indigenous kinship, and strong anti-reprisal protections.
2. Unions: Negotiate explicit CL clauses (paid days, extended kin, seasonal flexibility, no-penalty) and set up joint cultural-safety committees with enforceable action timelines.
3. Funders/FSC ecosystem: Make the existence of a CL policy and cultural-safety metrics a grant/contract condition; finance shared Indigenous HR/ombuds services for SMEs; fund credential-bridging (fees, travel, exam prep).
4. Education/training providers: Co-design manager training with Elders/Knowledge Keepers and offer micro-credentials in Indigenous cultural safety for supervisors and HR professionals.

What Outcomes Are Possible? (Key performance indicators every 6–12 months; disaggregate by role/department/status)

1. Retention: Track 12- and 24-month retention for Indigenous employees; e.g., target a 10–15% improvement within two years.

2. Advancement: Measure time from hire to first supervisory role (“promotion velocity”); close any parity gap within 36 months.
3. Representation: Report Indigenous representation in management and governance; set annual increases (e.g., 2–3% per year).
4. CL utilization & safety: Monitor number of requests, approval rates, and evidence that CL use has no negative impact on evaluations or advancement.
5. Reporting climate: Track number of complaints (an initial rise may reflect growing trust), time to acknowledge/resolve, and a post-case “trust score.”
6. Cultural safety index: Run twice-yearly pulse surveys (e.g., “I can take Cultural Leave without negative consequences”; “I feel safe reporting discrimination”); e.g., aim for $\geq 80\%$ agreement within 24 months.

Opportunities for Further Research

1. Comparative effectiveness: Which CL designs (days, flexibility, definitions) yield the biggest gains in retention and advancement across sectors?
2. Causal links: Longitudinally examine how CL, safer reporting, and increased Indigenous leadership interact and influence outcomes.
3. Cost–benefit: Quantify avoided turnover, reduced absenteeism, and productivity gains from cultural-safety investments to inform procurement and policy.
4. Urban vs. rural: Assess differences in CL access and outcomes across contexts.
5. Employer perspectives & resistance: Map forms of resistance (culture, funding, operations, policy inertia) to design implementation supports and anticipate barriers.

Limitations of this Study

The sample is weighted towards British Columbia and includes many organizations already inclined to participate in this work. Experiences in more resistant environments may therefore be underrepresented. Because policies and collective agreements vary by sector and province, adoption will require some local adaptation. While outreach was broad, the sample may underrepresent Indigenous employees in remote or non-networked workplaces. These limits do not change the central conclusion: dedicated Cultural Leave, coupled with culturally safe systems - supported by Indigenous leadership, fair promotion criteria, and real accountability - improves trust, retention, and progression.

Annex: Supporting Materials

Appendix A: Participant Inclusion Criteria

Eligibility for Indigenous employees to participate in the study include:

- 19 years of age or above;
- Who self-identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit);
- Currently or recently been employed in British Columbia;
- Proficient in English;
- Comfortability sharing their perspectives on workplace inclusion and cultural safety in a confidential setting.

Eligibility criteria for employers, managers, and HR professionals include:

- 19 years of age or above;
- Recent experience as an employer, supervisor, or HR manager in British Columbia.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form Focus Group

Project Title: Essential Services vs. Essential Time Off

Coastal Research, Education, and Advocacy Network (CREAN)

Suad Ahmed, Research Coordinator, suad@creansociety.org

Ava Redmond, Researcher, ava@creansociety.org

March 19 2025

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a focus group for the “Essential Services vs. Essential Time Off” project, conducted by the Coastal Research, Education & Advocacy Network (CREAN). The study explores the challenges Indigenous employees face in accessing time off for cultural holidays, ceremonies, and events. This study aims to identify barriers, inform workplace policies, and advocate for culturally inclusive labor practices.

CREAN is a non-profit organization dedicated to research, education, and advocacy for vulnerable British Columbia (BC) residents. Funding for the project comes from the Future Skills Centre.

What Participation Involves

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Before you decide to participate in this study, it

is important to understand what is expected of you, and any potential risks and benefits of participating. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and a copy will be given to you.

Focus groups will be 1-2 hours, or however long you wish to participate. You will be asked about your experiences with workplace policies related to cultural time off, challenges you have faced, and recommendations for change. Focus groups will take place in person or virtually. In-person focus groups will take place at the Dock in Downtown (722 Cormorant Street) in Victoria. If participants prefer to meet virtually, a telephone or Zoom call will be scheduled.

You can choose not to answer any question and may withdraw from the focus group at any time.

Confidentiality and Data Security

If you agree to it, the focus groups will be audio-recorded to help us focus on the facilitation and accurately remember what you are saying. Audio recording will only be used for the purpose of transcribing and validating the notes. If video conferencing is used, the video will not be recorded. If a quote is considered for use, the participant will be contacted for explicit permission. No information will be attributed to you without your explicit consent. After quotes have been confirmed, an anonymous participant number will be assigned to you to protect your identity.

We will keep your identity as confidential as possible, and change names or identifying details as required. However, if you participate, full confidentiality may not be possible (for example, someone may have referred you to the focus group, or you may know other people in the focus group). If you decide to tell someone about your focus group responses, that is up to you. It is up to you what information you feel comfortable sharing in front of other focus group members. If you have concerns, please contact CREAN.

The information gathered in this study will be kept securely for five years after the end of the project. All data will be stored securely on password-protected servers and accessed only by the research team. At the end of that period, paper transcripts or focus group notes will be confidentially shredded; digital files will be kept indefinitely. The digital files will not contain any identifiable information; all personal references and files with personal info are removed from all of the document after the initial timeline for paper file destruction.

Project Outcomes & Results

- Findings will be used to develop recommendations for employers and policymakers to improve workplace equity and inclusion.
- Results may be shared through research reports, community forums, and policy recommendations.
- Participants can request a summary of the findings by contacting the research team.

Potential Risks & Benefits

Participation may inconvenience you by taking up your time. Discussing workplace challenges may bring up emotional distress or discomfort. You are free to skip any questions, take a break, or to withdraw from the study entirely at any time without any consequences or any explanation. We can take a break any time during the focus group. If you want to end your participation in the study, you can decide if the information you have given can be used in the study or destroyed.

Participating in the study may or may not directly benefit you, although you may find it helpful or interesting to talk about your experience. The study will contribute to workplace improvements for Indigenous employees. Your experiences can help increase awareness and advocacy for cultural inclusion in workplaces.

We understand that participating might trigger unpleasant feelings or thoughts. Some options for support are provided below, or you can contact CREAN for more details.

Ethics Approval

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Community Research Ethics Board. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in our information, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the Chair, Community Research Ethics Board, at Community Research Ethics Office (Canada) Corp. c/o Centre for Community Based Research, 140 Westmount Road North, Waterloo ON N2L 3G5; Email: creoadmin@communityresearchethics.com

Participation Consent & Signature

I, _____ on _____, 2025, consent to participate in a focus group for the Essential Services vs. Essential Time Off research project conducted by CREAN. I understand the purpose and conditions of participating in the study, including any risks or benefits, and have had the opportunity to have questions answered by the researcher/s. By signing below, I indicate my understanding that:

- 1) I give consent for my words and responses to be recorded in notes, photos, and using secure audio-recording equipment (e.g., through handheld recorder, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams).
- 2) I understand that I will be contacted directly if a quote I provided is considered for attribution. In such cases, my explicit written consent will be required before any information is used and I will be assigned an anonymous participant number.
- 3) I am free to choose not to respond to any questions that may be asked, at any time, without providing a reason.
- 4) I can withdraw from the focus group at any time without giving a reason.
- 5) I understand that I will have the opportunity to verify my contributions to the focus

group transcript and make any edits I would like.

6) I understand that unless I have stated otherwise, information I provide may be included anonymously in reports, presentations, on social media, be published on CREAN's website, or made public in various methods (e.g., a public report to the Future Skills Centre that is publicly available on their website) related to the project.

- I consent to direct quotes from the focus group being included in research materials/reports, with my name attached.
- I consent to direct quotes from the focus group being included in research materials/reports, without my name attached (anonymously).
- In the case that I withdraw from the focus group/study, I want information I share to be included in the research reports. I must notify CREAN that I want to withdraw from the study by August 30, 2025, so my information can be removed from all project files before final reporting.

Support Resources

If you experience distress or require additional support, here are some resources available to you:

- ☎ **Hope for Wellness Help Line (24/7 Indigenous Support):** 1-855-242-3310 | hopeforwellness.ca
- ☎ **Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS):** 1-800-721-0066 | irsss.ca
- ☎ **KUU-US Indigenous Crisis Line:** 1-800-588-8717
- ☎ **Support Network for Indigenous Women & Women of Colour** offers free counselling: 250-277-2545

For workplace-related concerns, you may also consider reaching out to:

- ☎ **BC Human Rights Tribunal:** 1-888-440-8844 | bchrt.bc.ca

Appendix C: Focus Group Questions for Indigenous Employees

Section 1:

1. Can you describe a time when you needed to take time off for cultural or ceremonial reasons?

Prompt: What was that process like?

2. How does your current workplace handle requests for cultural leave? P

Prompt: What has worked well, and what hasn't?

3. In what ways has your workplace acknowledged Indigenous holidays, ceremonies, or practices?

Section 2:

4. How comfortable do you feel talking to your supervisor or HR about your cultural needs or practices?
5. What makes a workplace feel culturally safe or unsafe for you as an Indigenous employee?
6. Have there been moments where you felt your Indigenous identity was either supported or dismissed in your workplace?

Section 3:

7. If you've experienced discrimination or cultural bias at work, how did you respond?

Prompt: What supports were available to you?

8. What barriers exist to reporting discrimination or advocating for your needs?

Section 4:

9. How has your workplace's cultural leave policy (or lack thereof) impacted your overall well-being or ability to thrive at work?
10. What policies or practices would make the most difference in supporting Indigenous employees in your organization?
11. If you could send one message to employers across sectors about Indigenous cultural inclusion -- what would it be?

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions for Employers

Section 1:

1. What policies or informal practices does your workplace currently have in place to support Indigenous employees?
2. How are decisions made about approving cultural leave requests?

Prompt: Are there guidelines or is it case-by-case?

3. What challenges (if any) have you encountered when trying to implement cultural accommodations?

Section 2:

4. How does your workplace promote Indigenous cultural inclusion beyond land acknowledgements or training sessions?
5. What steps, if any, have you taken to build relationships with Indigenous communities or employees within your workplace?
6. What indicators do you use to assess whether Indigenous employees feel supported or included?

Section 3:

7. How does your leadership team prioritize equity for Indigenous staff within broader diversity and inclusion efforts?
8. Have you encountered any resistance to cultural accommodation initiatives from staff or management?

Prompt: If so, how did you address it?

Section 4:

9. What types of support or resources would help your organization create more robust cultural inclusion policies?
10. In your view, what does true Indigenous cultural inclusion look like in the workplace?

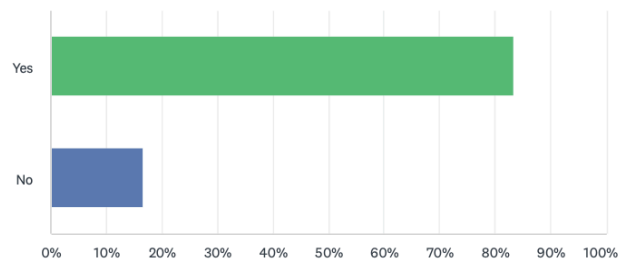
Prompt: what would it take to get there?

11. If Indigenous employees in your organization were asked what changes they'd like to see, what do you think they would say?

Appendix F: Survey Figures

Q8 Have you ever requested time off for cultural reasons (e.g., powwows, ceremonies, NationalDay for Truth and Reconciliation)?

Answered: 162 Skipped: 16

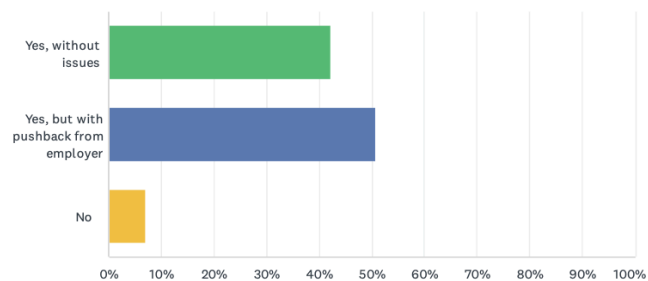


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	83.33%	135
No	16.67%	27
TOTAL		162

Figure 1. Survey Results: Time-off Requests

Q9 If yes, was your request for time off approved?

Answered: 156 Skipped: 22

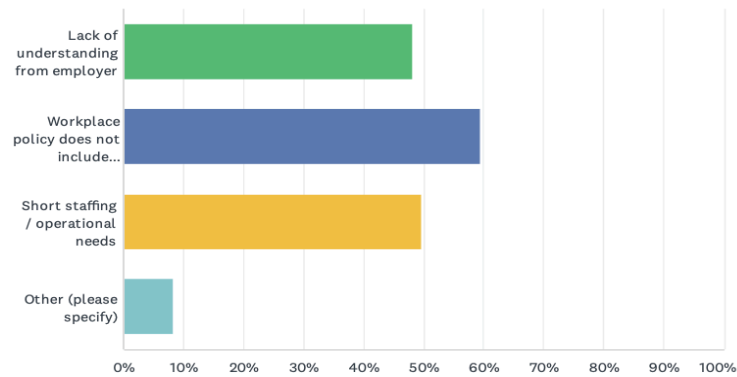


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, without issues	42.31%	66
Yes, but with pushback from employer	50.64%	79
No	7.05%	11
TOTAL		156

Figure 2. Survey Results: Time-off Request Approval

Q10 If your request was denied or difficult to approve, what reasons were given? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 143 Skipped: 35

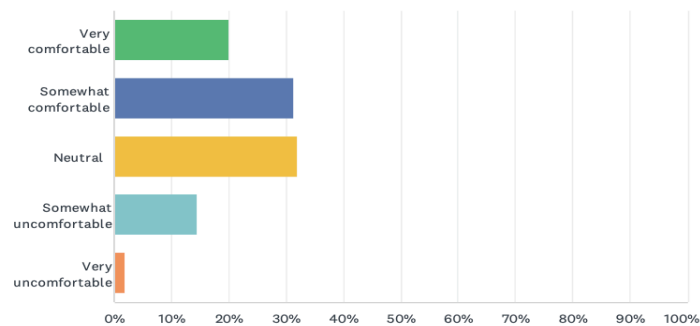


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of understanding from employer	48.25%	69
Workplace policy does not include cultural leave	59.44%	85
Short staffing / operational needs	49.65%	71
Other (please specify)	8.39%	12
Total Respondents: 143		

Figure 3. Survey Results: Time-off Denial Reasons

Q11 How comfortable do you feel discussing your cultural needs with your employer?

Answered: 159 Skipped: 19



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very comfortable	20.13%	32
Somewhat comfortable	31.45%	50
Neutral	32.08%	51
Somewhat uncomfortable	14.47%	23
Very uncomfortable	1.89%	3
TOTAL		159

Figure 4. Survey Results: Discussing Cultural Needs

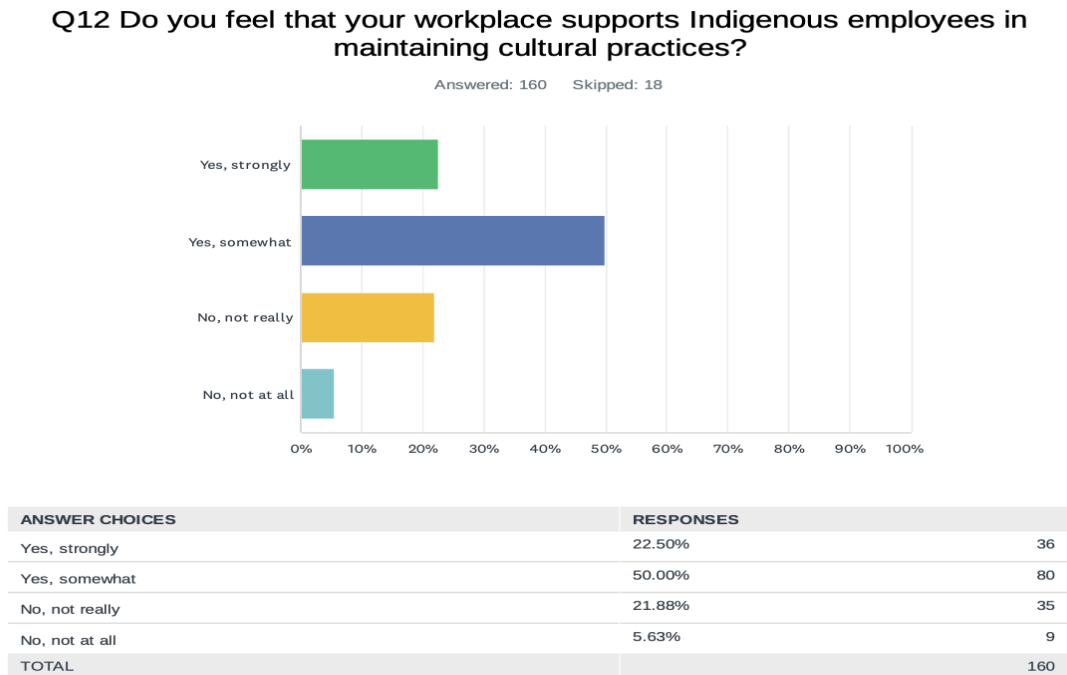


Figure 5. Survey Results: Support for Cultural Practices

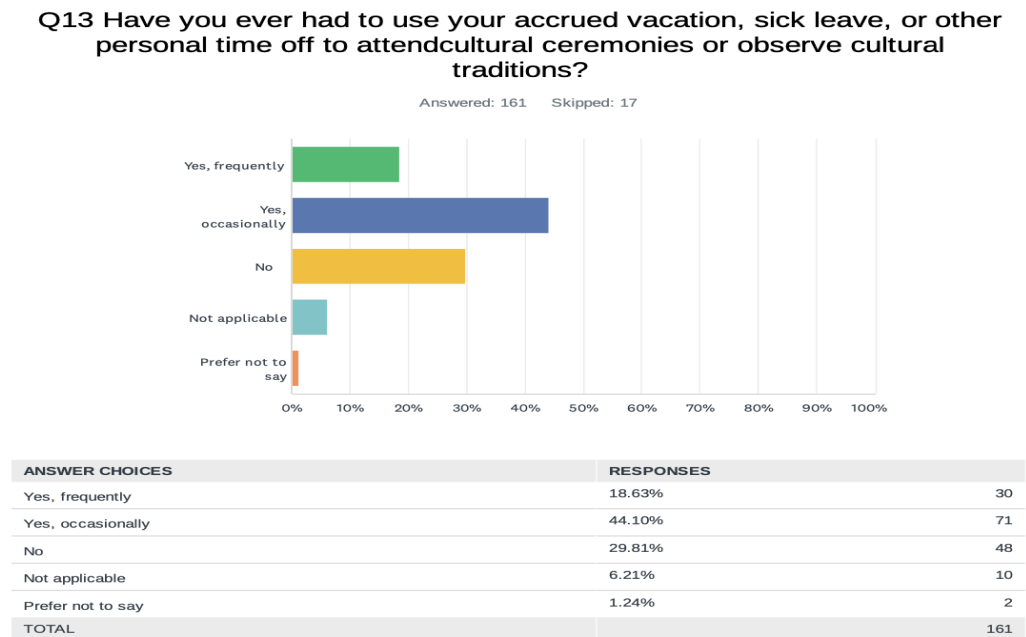
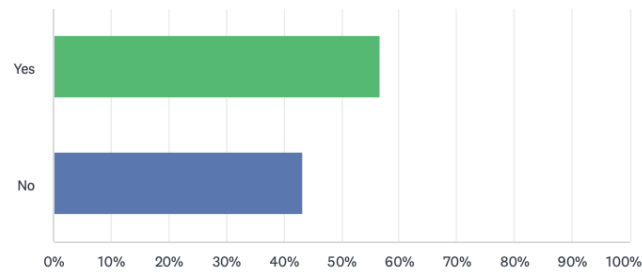


Figure 6. Survey Results: Personal Time Off Usage

Q16 Have you experienced workplace discrimination or bias related to your Indigenous identity?

Answered: 162 Skipped: 16

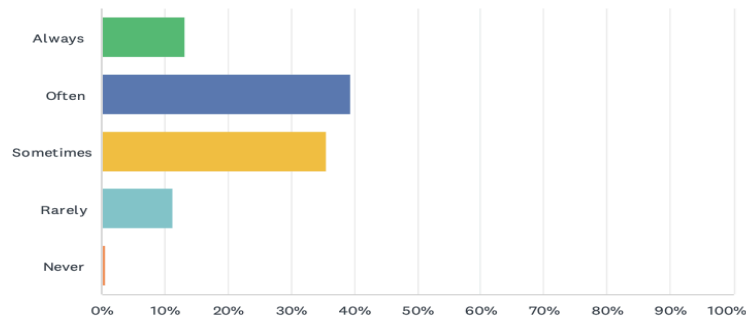


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	56.79%	92
No	43.21%	70
TOTAL		162

Figure 7. Survey Results: Indigenous Workplace Discrimination

Q19 How often do you feel that Indigenous perspectives are valued in your workplace?

Answered: 160 Skipped: 18



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Always	13.13%	21
Often	39.38%	63
Sometimes	35.63%	57
Rarely	11.25%	18
Never	0.63%	1
TOTAL		160

Figure 8. Survey Results: Indigenous Perspective Workplace Value

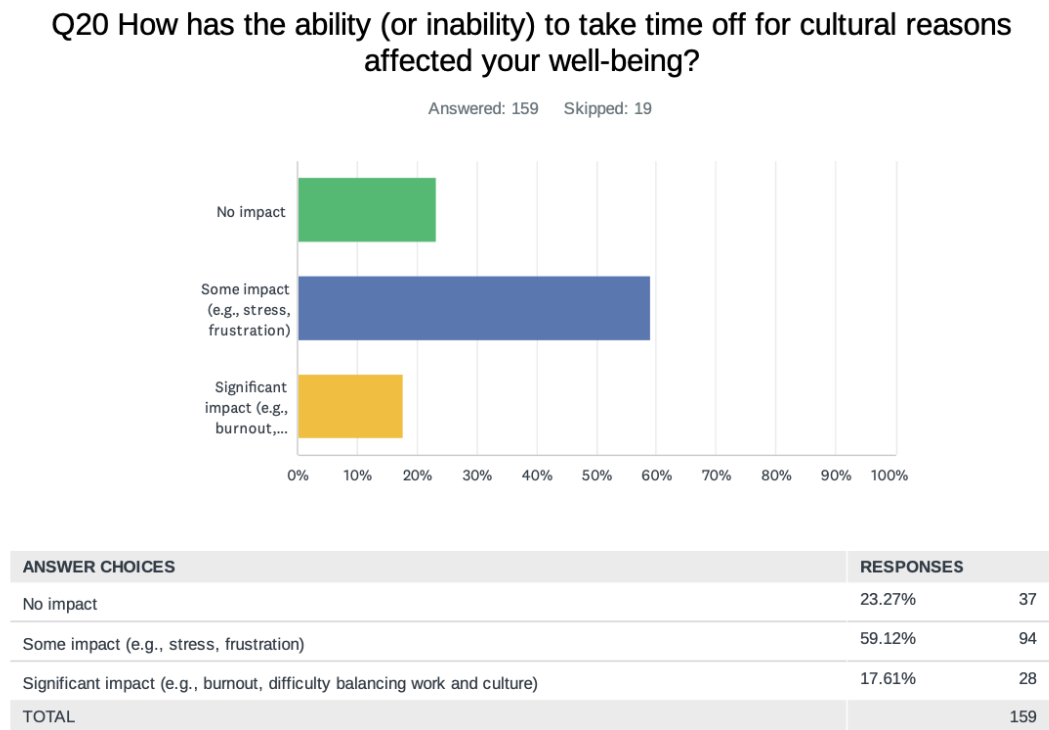


Figure 9. Survey Results: Time-off Well-being Impact

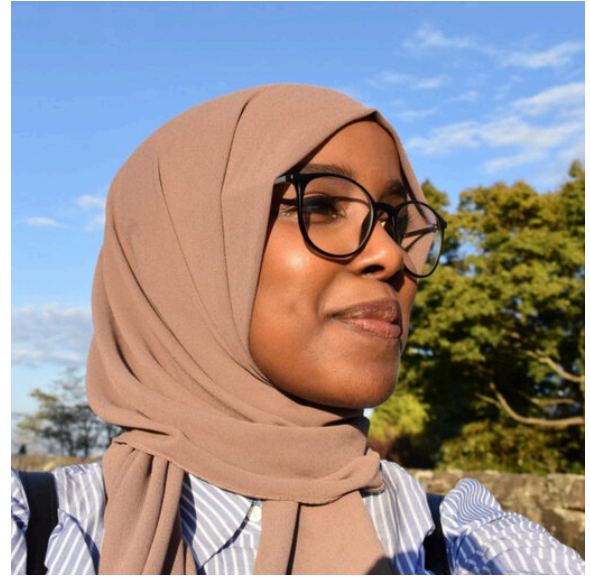
Appendix G: Team Biographies

Oodenaw: Urban Indigenous Consulting Cooperative

Oodenaw is a heart-centred, community-based Indigenous consulting cooperative committed to revitalizing languages, cultures, and community wellness. Our vision imagines Indigenous languages and cultures vibrant in homes, communities, workplaces, and beyond. We partner on projects that uplift communities, centre Indigenous values, and support the unlearning of colonial norms. As a cooperative, we structure work to support both our member workers and the communities we serve, with a strong commitment to creating workplaces or spaces that are culturally grounded, inclusive, and healthy for all. We specialize in curriculum and workshop development, policy, community engagement, language resurgence, Indigenous governance, and cultural design, always guided by the strengths, needs, and aspirations of the people we work with.

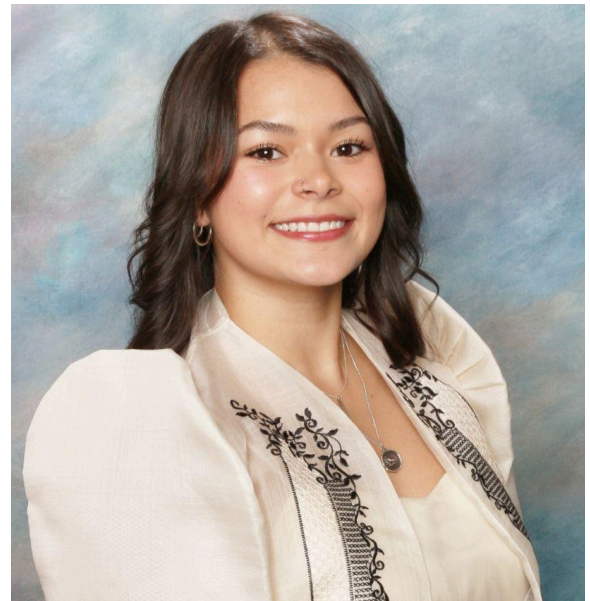
SUAD AHMED (RESEARCHER AND PROJECT MANAGER)

Currently pursuing a PhD in Education, Suad has extensive experience in quantitative, qualitative research, and technical report writing. Her experience as a Monitoring and Evaluation Intern with Education Cannot Wait at the UN-Global Fund for Education further showcases her proficiency in data analysis and report preparation. Suad's academic background also highlights her engagement with diverse and interdisciplinary research networks, essential for understanding and addressing community-specific priorities within a culturally responsive framework. Her academic achievements and recognition for excellence underscore her analytical capabilities and commitment to research-driven education initiatives.



AVA REDMOND (RESEARCH ASSOCIATE)

Ava is a researcher with experience gained through roles involving qualitative research, survey design, data analysis, and policy research. She is devoted to understanding barriers and inequalities in social spaces. Through her BA Honours in Political Science and MA in Political Science, and in her PhD studies in Communication and Culture, Ava has extensive experience in interdisciplinary and mixed-methods research through her academic roles. At CREAN, she supports research and evaluation projects, outreach, and assists with workshops on anti-racism.



CHARLES FROST (RESEARCHER)

Charles's research consulting experience involved analyzing data and producing insights that inform community-centered approaches, relevant to creating a comprehensive community plan. Additionally, his accolades in public speaking and coaching highlight his ability to connect with audiences, build trust, and facilitate meaningful discussions, essential skills for fostering inclusive community participation and managing project stakeholders effectively.

**JASPER DELICHTE (RESEARCH ASSOCIATE,
PROJECT MANAGEMENT)**

Jasper is a settler-Canadian researcher with a BSc in Cellular & Molecular Neuroscience. She brings experience in survey design, behavioural research, and data analysis, and has contributed to projects focused on concussion prevention, brain injury, and women's health. With a strong commitment to addressing barriers in social systems, Jasper is passionate about knowledge translation and making research accessible to diverse communities. At CREAN, she supports study design, outreach, leading focus groups, and report writing.



SHANNON SHERK (RESEARCH ASSOCIATE)

Shannon is a researcher with a BA Honours in Sociology and Environmental Studies from the University of Victoria. Guided by a passion for addressing the multidisciplinary impacts of climate change, Shannon is committed to advancing environmental justice through research and community healthcare. Within CREAN, they support with report writing and outreach.

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